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DOCTOR STRANGE

STEPHEN STRANGE was a pre-eminent surgeon until a car accident damaged the nerves in his hands. His ego drove him to scour the globe for a magical cure. Instead, he found a mysterious wizard called the Ancient One, who taught him the mystic arts and opened his eyes to the magic behind reality. Seeking power to defeat Doctor Doom, who'd usurped the mantle of Sorcerer Supreme of Earth, Doctor Strange became Sorcerer Supreme of Asgard--only to find himself stranded there after Thor's death. The wary denizens of the Nine Realms call him...

DOCTOR STRANGE

After the Dark Wizard Vyrbodin slaughtered Heven's Anchorites and its Regent, Idyl, Strange and Angela went to Alfheim to interrogate Vyrbodin's grandmother--Queen Aelsa. They discovered Aelsa was under attack by Vyrbodin's newest Scythe...a dark reflection of her dead daughter, Alydennai. Aelsa freed Alydennai from Vyrbodin's control, and she revealed that Vyrbodin was her son and once lived among an ancient sect of wizards in Vanaheim. There they found a mysterious black orb, potentially holding the secret of Vyrbodin's immortality. Angela suddenly received an SOS message that Rhialla and the remaining Angels found Vyrbodin and were headed to Svartalfheim to kill him, but flying into Dark Elf territory could lead the Angels to war...

WRITER
DEREK LANDY

ARTIST
IVAN FIORELLI

COLOR ARTIST
DONO SÁNCHEZ-ALMARA

LETTERER
VC's CORY PETIT

COVER
ALEX HORLEY

VARIANT COVERS
STEPHANIE HANS; NETHO DIAZ, SEAN PARSONS & ARTHUR HESLI

ASSISTANT EDITOR
SIDNEY STUBBS

EDITOR
ALANNA SMITH

EDITOR IN CHIEF
C.B. CEBULSKI

DOCTOR STRANGE CREATED BY STAN LEE & STEVE DITKO

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SVARTALFHEIM.

HOW'S IT LOOKING OUT THERE?

THE *ANGELS* AND THE *DARK ELVES* ARE KILLING EACH OTHER, WHICH IS ALL *VERY* ENTERTAINING--

--BUT YOU DON'T HAVE LONG BEFORE THE WINNERS STORM THIS DEPRESSING SHACK OF YOURS.

"YOURS"?

...OURS.

EXACTLY, MY *DARK DAUGHTER!* EXACTLY. WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER, AFTER ALL!

ARE WE? I'M NOT THE ONE HATCHING AN ARMY OF *MINDLESS CHILD KILLERS.*

AN ARMY OF *SCYTHES,* YOU MEAN--BORN TO DELIVER MY VENGEANCE ACROSS THE NINE REALMS.

BORN TO DELIVER *JUSTICE.* BORN TO DO WHAT I *TELL THEM.*

YOU REMEMBER WHAT *THAT'S* LIKE, DON'T YOU?

ARE YOU QUESTIONING MY LOYALTY, VYRBODIN?

YOU ARE THE DARK POTENTIAL OF THE ANGEL *RHIALLA*-- THOUGH NOW I WONDER IF YOU ARE QUITE DARK *ENOUGH.*

STILL-- WE'LL FIND OUT, WON'T WE?

ONCE THE BLOOD STARTS TO FLOW...

WELL, THIS ISN'T GOOD.

DARK ELVES OF SVARTALFHEIM! ANGELS OF HEVEN!

I AM STEPHEN STRANGE, SORCERER SUPREME OF ASGARD, AND I WOULD HAVE WORDS WITH THEE!

YOU! YOU ARE DREGTHORN, YES? DARK ELF COMMANDER? YOU LEAD THIS ARMY?

ARMY?

THESE WARRIORS ARE BUT THE TIP OF THE BLADE. THE *DARK ELF ARMY* HAS YET TO ARRIVE!

THEN BEFORE THEY GET HERE...

HI. I'M STEPHEN. COULD I HAVE A WORD?

YOU WISH TO TALK?

THE SORCERER VYRBODIN, HIDING WITHIN, THREATENS OUR *CHILDREN'S* LIVES, AND YOU WISH TO DISSUADE US FROM REMOVING HIS *HEAD?*

DISSUADE? NO! WELL, PERHAPS WE'D RECONSIDER THE HEAD REMOVAL, BUT--

VYRBODIN MUST DIE!

THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT WE CAME HERE *TO DO*, DREGTHORN!

BUT YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO BE HERE! FLY BACK TO HEVEN, LITTLE ANGELS!

FLY BACK TO YOUR *FORTRESS IN THE STARS* AND LET THE REST OF US DO WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE!

IF WE NEED TO CUT OUR WAY THROUGH YOU, OUR BLADES ARE READY!

THEN YOU WILL DROWN IN OUR BLOOD.

LISTEN TO ME. *LISTEN!*

YOU HAVE YOUR QUARRELS, YOU HAVE YOUR TERRITORIES, YOU HAVE YOUR ***GRUDGES.*** YOU MIGHT THINK THEM IMPORTANT, YET THESE ARE NOTHING BUT ***DISTRACTIONS.***

YOUR PRIORITY MUST BE TO STOP THE THREAT THAT AFFECTS US ***ALL.***

IF VYRBODIN SUCCEEDS IN RAISING HIS ARMY, EVERY CHILD IN THE NINE REALMS WILL ***DIE.***

STOPPING HIM IS THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERS!

HOW CONVINCING.

ANGELA?

I WONDER ABOUT *YOUR* DISTRACTIONS, STRANGE.

YOU LECTURE *THESE PEOPLE* ON PRIORITIES?

YOU, WHOSE ATTENTION IS ALWAYS DIVIDED, WHOSE MIND IS ALWAYS ACROSS A RAINBOW BRIDGE THAT NOW LIES SHATTERED?

AND YOU WONDER WHY THEY DON'T LISTEN?

I WAS BORN AN ASGARDIAN YET RAISED AN ANGEL. MY LIFE WAS CONTRACTS. MY LIFE WAS TRANSACTION.

NOTHING FOR NOTHING.

AND THEN I MET THOSE WHO PLACE A HIGHER VALUE ON LESSER THINGS, SUCH AS *FRIENDSHIP* AND *LOYALTY* AND *LOVE.*

EVERYTHING FOR EVERYTHING.

YOU CANNOT CARE WITHOUT INVESTING YOURSELF IN THOSE AROUND YOU--AND YOU CANNOT FIGHT WITHOUT CARING.

...

YOU'RE RIGHT.

THOR'S DEATH SEVERED MY HOME FROM THE OTHER NINE REALMS.

I'VE BEEN TRYING TO RETURN TO MIDGARD EVER SINCE, BUT NOTHING...NOTHING HAS WORKED.

EVERYONE I *LOVE* IS ON MIDGARD. EVERYONE I *FIGHT FOR* IS ON MIDGARD.

BUT I NEED TO FIGHT FOR WHAT'S *HERE.*

I MAY BE SORCERER SUPREME OF ASGARD, BUT I NEED TO ACT AS SORCERER SUPREME OF THE *NINE REALMS.*

THAT INCLUDES SVARTALFHEIM. THAT INCLUDES YOU--*AND* YOUR CHILDREN.

FORGIVE ME. YET AGAIN, I HAVE ALLOWED MY OWN SELF-INTEREST TO CLOUD MY JUDGMENT.

BUT INNOCENT LIVES ARE IN DANGER AND I *NEED* YOUR HELP.

PLEASE.

THIS IS SVARTALFHEIM, SORCERER. HERE JUSTICE COMES AT THE POINT OF A DARK ELF SPEAR.

VYRBODIN MURDERED MY MOTHER. HE SLAUGHTERED THE ANCHORITES.

THE QUEEN REGENT IS DEAD? I HAD NOT HEARD. YOU HAVE MY CONDOLENCES.

I... THANK YOU.

WE ENTERED YOUR REALM WITHOUT SEEKING PERMISSION. THIS WAS... RASH. UNHELPFUL.

YET UNDERSTANDABLE.

WE CANNOT LET YOU EXECUTE VYRBODIN ON OUR SOIL, ANGEL. BUT YOU CAN WATCH AS *WE* DO IT.

I DON'T CARE WHO KILLS HIM. I JUST WANT HIM *DEAD.*

WELL, THIS IS NICE.

OLD WOOD SPLINTERS, AND WE FLOOD VYRBODIN'S LAIR.

WE ARE AN OCEAN OF UNRELENTING WAVES.

AND WE CRASH UPON THE ROCKS.

THIS PLACE IS BIGGER THAN IT APPEARS.

THERE ARE MORE SCYTHES THAN THERE SHOULD BE.

IN THE GLOOM AND THE SHADOWS, VYRBODIN'S ARMY APPEARS TO BE ENDLESS.

ONWARD, STRANGE!

TRUST THE ANGELS AND THE DARK ELVES TO DEAL WITH HIS SCYTHES!

WE NEED TO STAY--

--FOCUSED.

ANGELA. RHIALLA. *FINALLY.*

AN END TO THE *BOREDOM.*

SEE TO THE SORCERER, STRANGE.

WE'LL DEAL WITH HIS DARK DAUGHTER.

DOCTOR STRANGE.

YOU MUST BE FEELING INORDINATELY *PLEASED* WITH YOURSELF THIS NIGHT.

AND WHY IS THAT?

YOU HAVE BROUGHT VIOLENCE TO MY HOME, SIR.

VIOLENCE! THE THING THAT BOTH ASGARDIANS AND MIDGARDIANS EXCEL AT IN THEIR OWN HAPPY LITTLE WAYS.

YOU SEEK TO MURDER CHILDREN.

ARE NOT *MY OWN* CHILDREN BEING MURDERED ABOVE US AS WE SPEAK?

YOUR SCYTHES ARE NOT YOUR CHILDREN.

NO. I SUPPOSE THEY'RE NOT.

MY *REAL* CHILDREN WERE MURDERED IN OUR HOME LONG AGO.

QUEEN AELSA TOLD ME.

SHE DID? OF COURSE SHE DID.

ONE OF MY ENEMIES SOUGHT OUT AND BUTCHERED MY FAMILY AND LEFT THEM FOR ME TO DISCOVER.

I WAS SO CLOSE TO LEAVING MY ANGER BEHIND. THE FALSE LIFE I'D BUILT UP--THAT WAS BECOMING MY ONLY REALITY.

MY ENEMY, WHOEVER THEY ARE, SAVED ME FROM LIVING A LIE. I SUPPOSE I SHOULD THANK THEM.

MAYBE WHEN MY HANDS ARE FINALLY WRAPPED AROUND THEIR THROAT, I SHALL SPARE A MOMENT TO *DO JUST THAT.*

KRKKT

GRRARRGH!

WHOK

YOU DON'T LOOK A BIT LIKE ME.

I WAS JUST THINKING THE SAME.

I'M MUCH PRETTIER.

KLNG

YOU DON'T REALLY THINK YOU CAN BEAT ME, DO YOU? I HAVE MASTERED MAGICS YOU'VE NEVER EVEN HEARD ABOUT.

IT'S TRUE. HE HAS.

BUT MAGIC IS LIKE MUSIC IN A LOT OF WAYS.

JUST BECAUSE YOU HAVEN'T *HEARD* OF SOMETHING DOESN'T MAKE IT *GOOD.*

I DON'T KNOW A LOT OF *POLKA BANDS,* FOR INSTANCE.

BUT I KNOW *ROCK N' ROLL.*

THE DIVINE MAELSTROM OF MYNNAKHAR!

UGH!

DOCTOR STRANGE...YOU ARE JUST AN *ENDLESS SOURCE* OF DELIGHT, AREN'T YOU?

YOU HEAR THAT?

THOSE ARE THE DYING CRIES OF YOUR FELLOW SCYTHES. YOUR SICK, TWISTED LITTLE PLAN NEVER EVEN GOT A CHANCE TO CLAIM ITS FIRST VICTIM.

IT WAS NEVER *MY* PLAN.

AH. YOU WERE JUST FOLLOWING ORDERS, WERE YOU?

VYRBODIN CREATED ME, SPUN ME OUT OF THE PERSON *YOU* COULD HAVE BEEN, RHIALLA.

YOU'RE NOTHING LIKE ME. YOU'RE A *MURDERER.*

BUT I *AM* YOU. A *VERSION* OF YOU ANYWAY. AND I KNOW YOU AS I KNOW MYSELF.

I KNOW ALL YOUR *LITTLE SECRETS*. I KNOW ALL YOUR *HIDDEN SHAMES.*

I KNOW HOW MUCH YOU RESENTED YOUR *MOTHER.*

LIAR!

RHIALLA! NO!

GUH.

NO!

DID YOU KNOW THAT YOU ARE HER *ONE TRUE FRIEND*, ANGELA?

DID SHE EVER TELL YOU THAT SHE VALUES *YOUR* OPINION ABOVE ALL OTHERS?

WAK

FITTING, THEN, THAT SHE SHOULD *DIE* IN YOUR PRESENCE. AS ALL GOOD FRIENDS *SHOULD.*

AND YET... LOOK AT YOU, RHIALLA.

YOU ARE A VERSION OF ME WHO IS FREE TO PURSUE HER OWN GOALS.

A VERSION NOT BEHOLDEN TO THE CAPRICIOUS WHIMS OF A ***MAD WIZARD.***

I AM ***BETTER*** THAN YOU. ***STRONGER*** THAN YOU. BUT I AM NOT ***MORE FLAWED*** THAN YOU.

AND FLAWS ARE...***ENDLESSLY*** INTERESTING.

I WONDER...

GET AWAY FROM HER! WHAT ARE YOU--?

OHH. NOW THIS... THIS IS ***FUN.***

I PRESS THE ATTACK. I HAVE TO.

SWAK

TO ALLOW VYRBODIN EVEN A MOMENT'S RESPITE WOULD BE TO HAND HIM VICTORY.

HIS SCYTHE MAGIC IS TOO UNPREDICTABLE.

TOO POWERFUL.

TOO DANGEROUS.

UGH!

TAPILLIAK'S WICKED CONTORTIONS!

OH, THIS IS A...THIS IS A GOOD ONE.

THIS AGONY IS QUITE EXQUISITE!

IT'LL TAKE ME A MINUTE TO EXTRICATE MYSELF FROM THIS.

YIELD, VYRBODIN. CALL OFF YOUR SCYTHES.

WHICH SCYTHES ARE YOU REFERRING TO? THE ONES UPSTAIRS?

THEY HAVE FALLEN, I'M AFRAID. THE DARK ELVES AND THE ANGELS HAVE PROVEN TOO MUCH FOR THEM.

A PITY. THEY SHOWED PROMISE.

"WHICH SCYTHES?"

THERE ARE MORE?

HMM? YOU CANNOT HAVE THOUGHT THAT THIS WAS MY *ONLY* LAIR, CAN YOU?

FOR EVERY SCYTHE I CALLED FORTH HERE, ANOTHER WAS BORN IN EACH OF MY *OTHER* LAIRS, FROM *ASGARD* TO *VANAHEIM.*

HOW MANY?

LAIRS? SOMEWHERE OVER 1,220.

AT 96 SCYTHES PER LAIR, THAT LEAVES US WITH--

OVER 117,000.

THAT SOUNDS ABOUT RIGHT, YES.

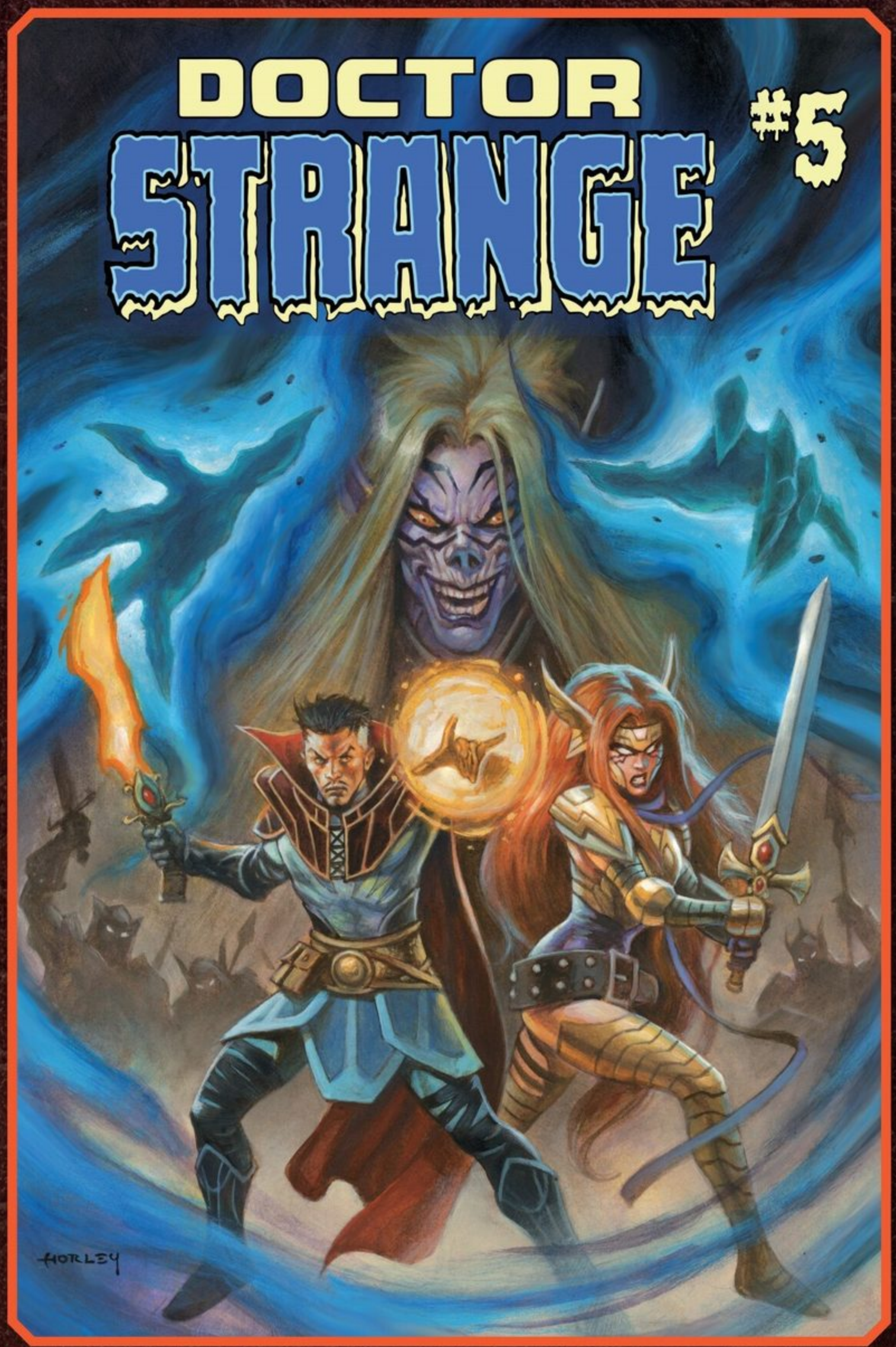
"OVER 117,000 SCYTHES, WHO ARE NOW TAKING TO THE SKIES--

"--TO KILL EVERY LAST CHILD IN THE NINE REALMS."

TO BE CONTINUED...

NEXT

As thousands of Vyrbodin's Scythes flood the skies to attack the Nine Realms, Strange and Angela race to trap the dark wizard. But his right hand, the Scythe counterpart of the angel Rhialla, has combined with her double to become bigger, stronger and deadlier than ever. Can Strange and Angela defeat the two as the fate of the Nine Realms hangs in the balance?



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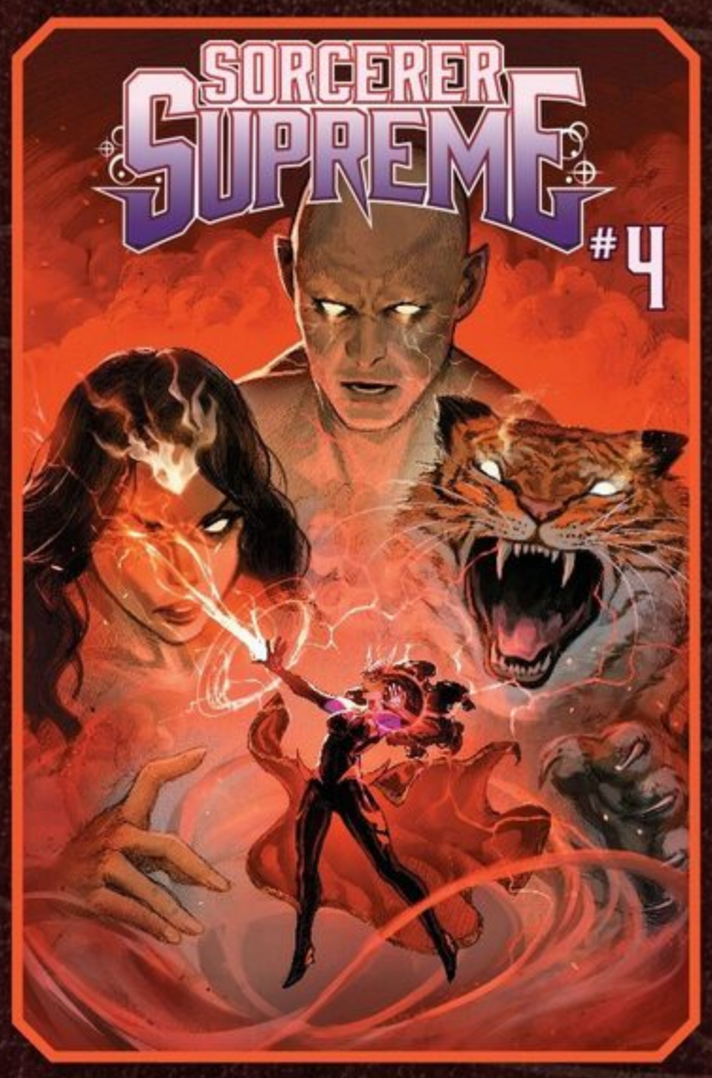

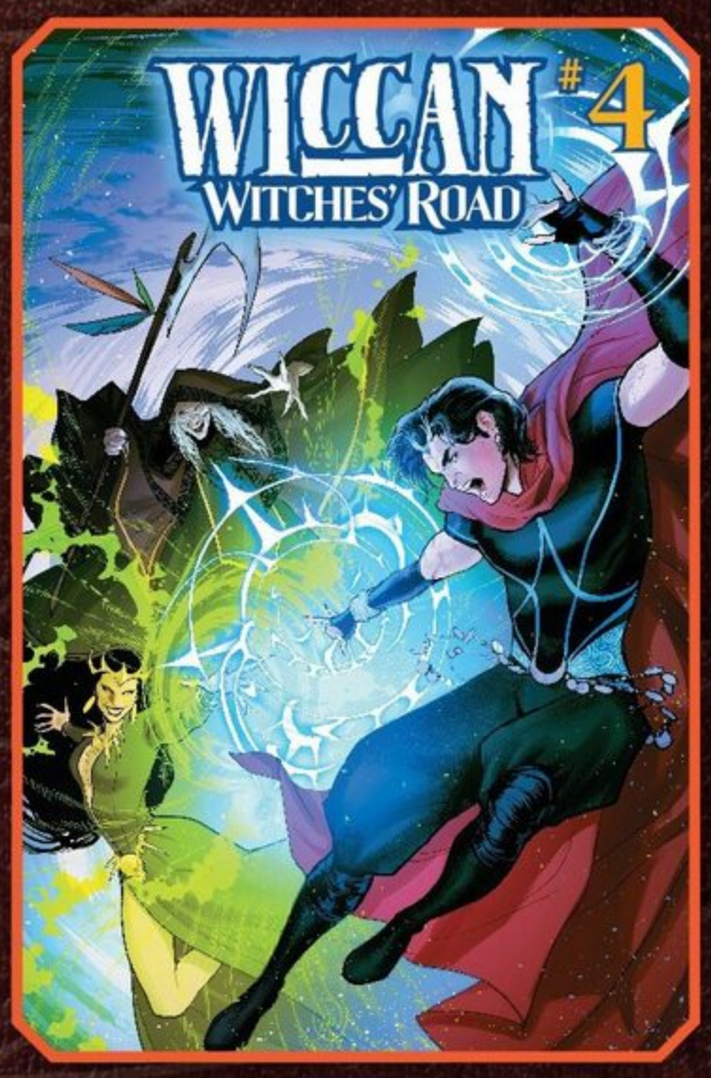

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